

A
NARRATIVE
OF
THE PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BRITISH FLEET,
COMMANDED BY
ADMIRAL SIR JOHN JERVIS, K. B.
IN THE LATE ACTION WITH THE SPANISH FLEET,
ON THE FOURTEENTH OF FEBRUARY, 1797,
OFF CAPE ST. VINCENT'S.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

ILLUSTRATED WITH EIGHT PLANS, SHEWING THE POSITIONS OF THE TWO FLEETS AT
DIFFERENT PERIODS OF THAT GLORIOUS AND MEMORABLE ACTION.

Dicam insigne, recens, adhuc

Indictum ore alio.

HOR. CARM. XXV. Lib. II.

BY AN OFFICER OF HIS MAJESTY'S LAND-FORCES.

L O N D O N:

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M.DCC.XCVII.



A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE Letter which is now submitted to the Public, was not originally intended for the press. The Narrative which it contains was drawn up for the information and entertainment of a private circle. The same, however, cannot be said of the Plans that illustrate it: they were intended for publication, and were already in the hands of the Engraver, when, at the earnest solicitation of the Publisher, the Gentleman who designed them was persuaded to consent to the Letter's being annexed to the Plans.

The Reader will, therefore, be pleased to bear these circumstances in his recollection, in the perusal of the following sheets.

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The Publisher cannot but congratulate himself and the Public, on having thus obtained an authentic description of an Action, that reflects such lustre on the wisdom, ability, and intrepid conduct of the British Admiral; which places the superior bravery, discipline, and seamanship of the British Navy, in so exalted a point of view; and which, considering all the circumstances attending it, is certainly unprecedented in the Naval Annals of Great Britain.

A

NARRATIVE, &c.

*On board the Lively Frigate, off the Island of Scilly,
February 27, 1797.*

ONCE more, my dear Sir, I am in sight of Old England, the land of rational liberty; and the pleasure of revisiting my native country, after an absence of six years, is not a little increased by the satisfaction of being on board a frigate that is the messenger of great and important news;—a splendid and decisive victory—a victory unparalleled in the annals of our naval history.

Admiral Sir John Jervis, with fifteen sail of the line and four frigates, has defeated the Spanish Grand Fleet, consisting of twenty-seven ships of the line and ten frigates, and captured four sail of the line, two of which are of three decks.

This

This brilliant affair took place off Cape St. Vincent's, on the 14th of February, the anniversary of St. Valentine, who by this glorious event has almost eclipsed his brother Crispian; and henceforth we must say, with the Poet :

“ He *that's* outliv'd this day, and comes safe home,
 “ Will stand a tiptoe when the day is nam'd,
 “ And rouse him at the name of *Valentine*.”

Captain Calder, Captain of the Fleet under the command of Sir John Jervis, bears home the Admiral's dispatches, and is now on board the *Lively*. It is expected that he will land to-morrow; and I purpose to avail myself of that opportunity, to transmit you such an account of this splendid action, as I have been able to arrange in the time that has elapsed since we separated from the British Fleet in Lagos Bay.

You will, perhaps, wish to know by what fortunate means I became a witness of this brilliant action; and, that my narrative may obtain the more credit with you, you shall be first satisfied on that head. When Sir Gilbert Elliot, late Viceroy of Corsica, embarked at Porto Ferajo for England, I had the honour to accompany his Excellency. Sir Gilbert embarked on board the *Minerva* frigate, Captain George Cockburn, carrying the broad pendant of Commodore Nelson. We quitted Elba at the latter end of January, and, after reconnoitring the principal French and Spanish ports in the Mediterranean, arrived at Gibraltar a few days after the Spanish fleet had passed through the

Straits from Carthage. Impatient to join Admiral Sir John Jervis, Commodore Nelson remained only one day at Gibraltar, and proceeded from thence on the 11th of February to the Westward. It is not essential to communicate to you the particulars attending the *Minerva's* being chased by two Spanish line-of-battle ships from the Bay of Gibraltar; nor of her falling in with the Spanish fleet, off the mouth of the Straits. It is sufficient to say, the Commodore joined Admiral Sir John Jervis's fleet off Cape St. Vincent, on the 13th of February, just in time to communicate to the Admiral some interesting intelligence, concerning the force and state of the Enemy's fleet, and to remove his pendant to the Captain, of 74 guns.

Upon joining the British Fleet, the *Lively* frigate, commanded by the Right Hon. Lord Viscount Garlies, was appointed to proceed with Sir Gilbert Elliot, and the gentlemen accompanying him, to England; but there being at this time reason to expect an approaching action between the two Fleets, the *Lively*, at the joint solicitations of Sir Gilbert Elliot and Lord Garlies, was detained with the squadron until the event should be known.

Thus stationed on board the *Lively*, which acted as a repeating frigate during the action, I was at liberty to observe the manœuvres of both Fleets, and to view the interesting scene before me, with more precision and leisure than if the ship in which I was embarked had been a principal in the fight; and by comparing my notes with others, and conferring with the chief actors in this brilliant affair, I have reason to believe, I have not only collected correct information relative

to the proceedings of our Fleet, and to the conduct of some individuals, whose behaviour on that occasion entitles them strongly to the admiration and gratitude of their King and country; but I am enabled to illustrate my description of the events with a series of sketches, shewing the Fleets in various positions, which to you who are conversant with my method, and are interested in these details, will convey, I have little doubt, a satisfactory idea of this splendid and important engagement.

I need not, for the present purpose, detail to you the many disappointments and unfortunate accidents experienced by the British Admiral, previous to the moment which so amply repaid him for all his former solicitude. Such a relation would indeed strongly illustrate one of the great qualities which so eminently distinguish his mind, and would present him to you, not only firm and undaunted, but rising under difficulties in proportion to their pressure. It will, however, be sufficient for a clear comprehension of what I have to lay before you, on the proceedings of the glorious 14th of February, to remark, that notwithstanding the means taken by his Majesty's Ministers for augmenting Sir John's fleet to a force adequate to the service, yet such had been the losses and injuries * sustained by the British Squadron, from
causes

* Courageux, of 74 guns, lost in the Straits of Gibraltar.

Gibraltar, of 80 guns, forced from her anchorage at Gibraltar, struck on the Pearl Rock in quitting the Bay, and obliged to proceed to England for repairs.

Zealous, of 74 guns, struck on a rock in Tangiers Bay, and obliged to repair at Lisbon.

Bombay Castle, of 74 guns, lost in going into the River Tagus.

Saint George, of three decks, grounded on the Cachops, coming out of the Tagus the 18th January, and obliged to put back for repairs.

causes equally unavoidable and disastrous, that his actual force, when the reinforcements, under the command of Rear-Admiral William Parker, joined him off Cape St. Vincent, was in effect the same as that which he commanded when these reinforcements were first required. It is somewhat remarkable, that even this force was in imminent danger of being further diminished by the unfortunate accident of the Coloffus and Culloden running aboard of each other, by which the latter received such material and serious injury, that under any other circumstances it might have been prudent for her to have taken refuge in the nearest port. The zeal, activity, and resources of her commander, Captain Trowbridge, were however equal to the remedying of this evil; and in a short time the Culloden, though her damages could by no means be entirely repaired, was nevertheless reported fit again for service.

With some commanders it might have been deemed the most prudent conduct, under these circumstances, to have acted on the defensive until additional ships had been sent from England: with Sir John Jervis it was otherwise—he, confiding in the unanimity, zeal, and bravery of the squadron under his command, determined on active operations. Fixing a rendezvous for his reinforcements, for his cruisers, and for the convoys that he expected, he went to sea with ten sail of the line, though he knew the Enemy might have, if they had not, thrice that number; and after accompanying a Portuguese squadron and convoy a convenient distance to the westward, he repaired to the place appointed, where he was joined by his reinforcement, under Rear-Admiral Parker.

Before I enter on the detail of the proceedings of the important day which will certainly immortalize the name of Jervis, and of his brave seconds, it is proper to state the relative force of the British and Spanish Fleets.

The British Fleet, or to use, I believe, a more correct term, the British Squadron, consisted of fifteen sail of the line, four frigates, a sloop of war, and a cutter, viz. two of 100 guns, two of 98 guns, two of 90 guns.—Total, six three-deckers, eight of 74 guns, and one of 64 guns*.

The Spanish Fleet was composed of twenty-seven sail of the line, ten frigates, and one brig; viz. one of four decks, carrying 136 guns; six of three decks, each of 112 guns; two of 84 guns, and eighteen of 74 guns each†.

The Spanish Admiral had sailed from Carthagená the 4th of February. On the 5th, he passed Gibraltar, leaving in that Bay three line-of-battle ships, supposed to be laden with military stores for the Spanish troops stationed before that garrison; two of which ships afterwards chased Commodore Nelson, in the *Minerva*. The strong easterly gale that had been friendly for their getting out of the Mediterranean, was however unpropitious to their gaining the Port of Cadiz.

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* *Vide* Appendix, N° II.

† *Vide* Appendix, N° III.

On the night of the 11th, as I have before mentioned, they were fallen in with, off the mouth of the Straits, by the Minerva. And the evening of the day on which Commodore Nelson joined Sir John Jervis off Cape St. Vincent, we find their Fleet driven farther to the Westward; for a part of them were not only seen by the Minerva, before she joined the British Fleet; but La Bonne Citoyenne, a British sloop of war, commanded by Captain Lindsay, arrived in the fleet the same evening with intelligence, that not two hours before she had exchanged shots with one of the Enemy's frigates, and that the Enemy's Fleet was not far distant.

It was upon receiving this intelligence, and hearing Sir John Jervis, in consequence of it, give orders for the signal to be made to prepare for battle, that Sir Gilbert Elliot and Lord Garlies earnestly solicited to remain with the squadron until the event of the action should be known: and his consent to this request enables me to offer you a detail of the operation of that day, so highly honourable to the British Arms.

And now, my dear Sir, having satisfied you on my own means of information, I proceed to the object of my Letter.

Before sun-set in the evening of the 13th, the signal had been made for the British Squadron to prepare for battle, and the ships were also directed to keep in close order during the night.

At day-break on the 14th (St. Valentine's day) the British Fleet was in complete order, formed in two divisions (*vide* Plate N^o I.) standing on a wind to the S. S. W. The morning was hazy. About half past six o'clock A. M. the Culloden made the signal for five sail in the S.W. by S. quarter, which was soon after confirmed by the Lively and Niger frigates, and that the strange sail were by the wind on the starboard tack. The Bonne Citoyenne sloop of war, Captain Lindsay, was therefore directed to reconnoitre. At a quarter past eight o'clock, the Squadron was ordered, by signal, to form in a close order; and in a few minutes afterwards the signal was repeated to prepare for battle.

About half past nine o'clock, the Culloden, Blenheim, and Prince George, were ordered to chase in the S. by W. quarter; which, upon the Bonne Citoyenne's making a signal that she saw eight sail in that quarter, was afterwards strengthened by the Irresistible, Colossus, and Orion.

A little past ten o'clock, the Minerva frigate made the signal for twenty sail in the S. W. quarter, and a few minutes after, of eight sail in the S. by W. Half an hour afterwards the Bonne Citoyenne made the signal that she could distinguish sixteen, and immediately afterwards twenty-five of the strange ships, to be of the line. The Enemy's Fleet were indeed become now visible to all the British Squadron.

The ships first discovered by the Culloden, were separated from their main body, which being to windward, were bearing down in some confusion, with a view of joining their separated ships. It appeared to have

have been the British Admiral's intention, upon discovering the separated ships of the Enemy's Fleet, to have cut them off, if possible, before their main body could arrive to their assistance; and with this view the fast-sailing ships of his Squadron were ordered to chase.

Affured now of the near position of their main body, he probably judged it most advisable to form his fleet into the line of battle, and the signal was made for their forming the line of battle a-head and a-stern as most convenient. A signal was made directing the Squadron to steer S. S. W. (*Vide Plate N^o II.*)

About twenty minutes past eleven o'clock, the Admiral pointed out that the Victory (his flag-ship) would take her station next to the Colossus. Some variation in steering was afterwards directed, in order to let the rear ships close up. At twenty-six minutes past eleven o'clock, the Admiral communicated his intention to pass through the enemy's line, hoisting his large flag and ensign; and soon after the signal was made to engage.

The British van by this time had approached the Enemy; and the distinction of leading the British line into action, fell to the lot of the Culloden, commanded by Captain Trowbridge. About half past eleven o'clock, the firing commenced from the Culloden against the enemy's headmost ships to windward.

As the British Squadron advanced, the action became more general; and it was soon apparent that the British Admiral had accomplished his design of passing through the enemy's line.

The animated and regular fire of the British Squadron was but feebly returned by the enemy's ships to windward, which, being frustrated in their attempts to join the separated ships, had been obliged to haul their wind on the larboard tack: those to leeward, and which were most effectually cut off from their main body, attempted also to form on their larboard tack, apparently with a determination of either passing through, or to leeward of our line, and joining their friends; but the warm reception they met with from the centre ships of our squadron, soon obliged them to put about; and excepting one, the whole fought safely in flight, and did not again appear in the action until the close of the day (*vide* Plate N^o III).

The single ship just mentioned persevered in passing to leeward of the British line, but was so covered with smoke, that her intention was not discovered until she had reached the rear, when she was not permitted to pass without notice, but received the fire of our sternmost ships; and as she luffed round the rear, the Lively and other frigates had also the honour of exchanging with this two-decker several broadsides.

Sir John Jervis, having effected his first purpose, now directed his whole attention to the enemy's main body to windward, consisting
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at this time of eighteen sail of the line. At eight minutes past twelve, the signal therefore was made for the British fleet to tack in succession, and soon after he made the signal for again passing the enemy's line.

The Spanish Admiral's plan seemed to be to join his ships to leeward, by wearing round the rear of our line; and the ships which had passed and exchanged shots with our squadron, had actually borne up with this view.

This design, however, was frustrated by the timely opposition of Commodore Nelson, whose place in the rear of the British line afforded him an opportunity of observing this manœuvre, and of penetrating the Spanish Admiral's intention. His ship, the Captain, had no sooner passed the rear of the enemy's ships that were to windward, than he ordered her to wear, and stood on the other tack towards the enemy.

In executing this bold and decisive manœuvre, the Commodore reached the sixth ship from the enemy's rear, which was the Spanish Admiral's own ship, the Santissima Trinidad, of 136 guns, a ship of four decks, and said to be the largest in the world. Notwithstanding the inequality of force, the Commodore instantly engaged this colossal opponent, and for a considerable time had to contend not only with her, but with her seconds a-head and a-stern, of three decks each. While he maintained this unequal combat, which we viewed with admiration mixed with anxiety, his friends were flying to his support (*vide* Plate, N^o IV.); and the Enemy's attention was soon directed to the Culloden, Captain Trowbridge,

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and in a short time after to the Blenheim, of 90 guns, Captain Frederick, who opportunely came to their assistance.

The intrepid conduct of the Commodore staggered the Spanish Admiral, who already appeared to waver in pursuing his intention of joining the ships cut off by the British Fleet, when the Culloden's arrival, and Captain Trowbridge's spirited support of the Captain, together with the approach of the Blenheim, followed by Rear-Admiral Parker, with the Prince George, Orion, Irresistible and Diadem, not far distant, determined the Spanish Admiral to change his design altogether, and to make the signal for the ships of his main body to haul their wind, and make sail on the larboard tack.

Advantage was now apparent in favour of the British Squadron, and not a moment was lost in improving it. As the ships of Rear-Admiral Parker's division approached the Enemy's ships, in support of the Captain and her gallant second, the Blenheim and Culloden, (*vide* Plate, N^o V.) the cannonade became more animated and impressive. The superiority of the British fire over that of the enemy, and its effects on the enemy's hulls and sails, were so evident, that we in the frigate no longer hesitated to pronounce a glorious termination of the contest.

The British Squadron at this time was formed in two divisions, both on the larboard tack; their situation was as follows: (*vide* Plate N^o VI.) Rear-Admiral Parker, with the Blenheim, Culloden, Prince George,

the Rear-Admiral's ship, Captain, Orion, Irresistible, composed one division, which was engaged with the enemy's rear. Sir John Jervis, with the other division, consisting of the Excellent, Victory, Barfleur, Namur, Egmont, Goliath, and Britannia, was pressing forward in support of his advanced squadron, but had not yet approached the real scene of action.

The Colossus having in the early part of the day unfortunately lost her fore-yard and fore-top-mast-yard, was obliged, in consequence of these losses, to fall to leeward, and the Minerva's signal was made to take her in tow ; which was, however, handsomely declined by Captain Murray, when the Minerva had come within hail in execution of her orders.

While the British advanced division warmly pressed the enemy's centre and rear, the Admiral meditated, with his division, a co-operation, which must effectually compel some of them to surrender.

In the confusion of their retreat, several of the enemy's ships had doubled on each other, and in the rear they were three or four deep (*vide* Plate, N^o VI.) It was therefore the British Admiral's design to reach the weathermost of these ships, then bear up, and rake them all in succession with the seven ships composing his division. His object afterwards was to pass on to the support of his van division, which, from the length of time they had been engaged, he judged might be in want of it. The casual position, however, of the rear ships of his van division, prevented his executing this plan : the Admiral, therefore, ordered the Excellent, the leading ship

ship of his own division, to bear up; and, with the Victory, he himself passed to leeward of the enemy's rearmost and leewardmost ships, which, though almost silenced in their fire, continued obstinately to resist the animated attacks of all their opponents.

Captain Collingwood, in the Excellent, in obedience to the Admiral's orders, passed between the two rearmost ships of the Enemy's line, (*vide* Plate, N^o VI.) giving to the one most to windward, a 74, so effectual a broadside, that, with what she had received before, her Captain was induced to submit. The Excellent afterwards bore down on the ship to leeward, a three-decker; but observing the Orion engaged with her, and the Victory approaching her, he threw into her only a few discharges of musketry, and passed on to the support of the Captain, at that time warmly engaged with a three-decker carrying a flag. His interference here was opportune, as the continual and long fire of the Captain had almost expended the ammunition she had at hand, and the loss of her fore-top-mast, and other injuries she had received in her rigging, had rendered her nearly ungovernable.

The Spanish three-decker had lost her mizen-mast; and before the Excellent arrived in her proper station to open on this ship, the three-decker dropped astern aboard of, and became entangled with, a Spanish two-decker that was her second: thus doubled on each other, the Excellent gave the two ships her fire, and then moved forwards to assist the headmost ships in their attack on the Spanish Admiral, and the other ships of the Enemy's centre.

Meanwhile

Meanwhile Sir John Jervis, disappointed in his plan of raking the Enemy's rear ships, and having directed, as before observed, the Excellent to bear up, ordered the Victory to be placed on the lee-quarter of the rearmost ship of the Enemy, a three-decker, (*vide* Plate, N^o VI.) and having by signal ordered the Irresistible and Diadem to suspend their firing, threw into the three-decker so powerful a discharge, that her commander, seeing the Barfleur, carrying Vice-Admiral the Hon. W. Waldegrave's flag, ready to second the Victory, thought proper to strike to the British Chief. Two of the Enemy's ships had now surrendered, and the Lively frigate and Diadem had orders to secure the prizes. The next that fell, were the two with which Commodore Nelson was engaged.

While Captain Collingwood so nobly stepped in to his assistance, as has been mentioned before, Captain R. W. Miller, the Commodore's Captain, was enabled to replenish his lockers with shot, and prepare for a renewal of the fight: no sooner, therefore, had the Excellent passed on, than the gallant Commodore renewed the battle.

The three-decker with which he was before engaged having fallen aboard her second, that ship, of 84 guns, became now the Captain's opponent. To her Commodore Nelson directed a vigorous fire; nor was it feebly returned, as the loss of the Captain evinced, near twenty men being killed and wounded in a very few minutes. It was now that the various damages already sustained by that ship through the long and arduous conflict which she had maintained, appearing to render a conti-

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nuance of the contest in the usual way precarious, or perhaps impossible ; and the Commodore not bearing to part with an enemy of whom he had assured himself, he instantly resolved on a bold and decisive measure, and determined, whatever might be the event, to attempt his opponent sword in hand. The boarders were summoned, and orders given to lay the Captain on board the Enemy.

Fortune favours the brave ; nor on this occasion was she unmindful of her favourite. Captain Miller so judiciously directed the course of the Captain, that she was laid aboard the starboard quarter of the 84-gun ship (*vide* Plate, N^o VI.) her spritsail yard passing over the Enemy's poop, and hooking her mizen throws ; and the word to board being given, the officers and seamen destined for this duty, headed by Lieutenant Berry, together with the detachment of the 69th regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Pearson, then doing duty as marines on board the Captain, passed with rapidity on board the Enemy's ship ; and in a short time the San Nicolas was in the possession of her intrepid assailants. The Commodore's impatience would not permit him to remain an inactive spectator of this event. He knew the attempt was hazardous ; and his presence, he thought, might contribute to its success. He therefore accompanied the party in this attack, passing from the fore chains of his own ship into the Enemy's quarter gallery, and thence through the cabin to the quarter deck, where he arrived in time to receive the sword of the dying Commander, who was mortally wounded by the boarders. For a few minutes after the officers had submitted, the crew below were firing their lower-deck guns : this irregularity, however, was

soon corrected, and measures taken for the security of the conquest. But this labour was no sooner atchieved, than he found himself engaged in another and more arduous one. The stern of the three-decker, his former opponent, was directly amidships on the weather-beam of the San Nicolas; and, from her poop and galleries, the Enemy forely annoyed with musquetry the British on board the San Nicolas. The Commodore was not long in resolving on the conduct to be observed upon this momentous occasion. The alternative that presented itself, was to quit the prize, or advance. Confident in the bravery of his seamen, he determined on the latter. Directing therefore an additional number of men to be sent from the Captain, on board the San Nicolas, the undaunted Commodore headed himself the assailants in this new attack, and success crowned the enterprise. Such, indeed, was the panic occasioned by his preceding conduct, that the British no sooner appeared on the quarter-deck of their new opponent, than the Commandant advanced, and asking for the British commanding Officer, dropped on one knee, and presented to him his sword; making, at the same time, an excuse for the Spanish Admiral's not appearing, as he was dangerously wounded. For a moment Commodore Nelson could scarcely persuade himself of this second instance of good fortune; he therefore ordered the Spanish Commandant, who had the rank of a Brigadier, to assemble the officers on the quarter-deck, and direct steps to be taken instantly for communicating to the crew the surrender of the ship. All the officers immediately appeared; and the Commodore found the surrender of the San Josef ascertained, by each of them delivering to him his sword.

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The Coxswain of the Commodore's barge had attended the Commodore throughout this perilous adventure. To him the Commodore gave in charge the swords of the Spanish Officers as he received them; and the jolly Tar, as they were delivered to him, tucked these honourable trophies under his arm, with all the *sang-froid* imaginable.

It was at this moment also that an honest Jack Tar, an old acquaintance of the Commodore, came up to him in the fullness of his heart, and excusing the liberty he was taking, asked to shake him by the hand, to congratulate him upon seeing him safe on the quarter-deck of a Spanish three-decker.

This new conquest had scarcely submitted, and the Commodore returned on board the San Nicolas, when the latter ship was discovered to be on fire in two places.—At the first moment appearances were alarming; but presence of mind and resources were not wanting to the British officers in this emergency. The fire-men were immediately ordered from the Captain; and proper means being taken, the fires were soon got under.

A signal was now made by the Captain, for boats to assist in separating her from her prizes; and as the Captain was incapable of further service until refitted, the Commodore hoisted his pendant, for the moment, on board the Minerva frigate, and in the evening removed it to the Irresistible, Captain Martin.

Four of the Enemy's ships were now in possession of the British Squadron (two of three decks, the Salvador del Mondo, and the San Josef, of 112 guns each; one of 84, the San Nicolas; and the San Ysidro, of 74 guns); and the van of the British line still continued to press hard the Santissima Trinidad, and others in the rear of the Enemy's flying fleet. The approach however of the Enemy's ships which had been separated from their main body in the morning, two new ships also bearing down from to windward, (*vide* Plates, N^o VI. & VII.) and two of the Enemy's flying ships wearing to support their Chief, at that time severely pressed, (*vide* Plate, N^o VII.) add to which, the closing of the day—these circumstances, but more particularly the lateness of the hour, while the prizes were not yet properly secured, determined the British Admiral to bring to. The headmost of the Enemy's approaching ships (in all nine in number, two of which were of three decks) had indeed advanced to fire on the Britannia, in which Vice-Admiral Thompson carried his flag, and the sternmost ships of the rear-division, which were fortunately at this period in a situation to keep the Enemy in check. The Victory likewise, with the Barfleur and Namur, had formed to cover the prizes. The British Admiral, therefore, a little before four o'clock P. M. made the preparative, and soon after the signal, for the British Fleet to bring to. The Enemy's fresh ships, on approaching, opened a fire on our covering ships; but, though both fresh and so superior in numbers (*vide* Plate, N^o VII.) they contented themselves with the noise of a few irregular broadsides, leaving their captured friends, and seeming too happy to be allowed to

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escape with their discomfited Chief, and his disabled companions, to think of molesting our Squadron in bringing to on the starboard tack.

The frigates having orders to take in charge the prizes not already taken possession of, the four were soon secured as well as circumstances permitted; and the Captain having suffered very considerably in her masts and rigging, the Minerva was ordered to take her in tow. At the close of the evening, the British Fleet was again formed in most admirable line of battle, on a wind with their heads to the southward, (*vide* Plate, N^o VIII.) and the Niger frigate ordered to look out during the night.

The close of the day, before the four prizes were secured, undoubtedly saved the Spanish Admiral's flag from falling into the hands of the victors. The Santissima Trinidad, in which he carried it, had been so much the object of attention, that the ship was a perfect wreck when the action ceased. Many indeed aver, that she actually struck both her flag and ensign, hoisting a white flag as a signal of submission; but as she continued her course, and afterwards hoisted a Spanish jack, others doubt this circumstance. It is however a truth, that her fire had been silent for some time before this event is reported to have occurred.

The loss of the Enemy in this engagement must have been very considerable. The fire of the British Squadron was, throughout the action, superior in the proportion of five or six to one; and if we

were to judge from the number of killed and wounded found on board the prizes, their casualties must greatly exceed the numbers that have been usually computed. Almost all their wounded that had lost limbs died for want of assistance; and many others, who were wounded in other parts, were found dead in the holds.

The loss of the British Squadron, in killed and wounded*, amounted to exactly three hundred: moderate indeed, when compared with that of the Enemy, and considering the duration of the action! But the expenditure of ammunition was, I am told, beyond any recent example. The Culloden expended, it is said, one hundred and seventy barrels of powder; the Captain, one hundred and forty-six; and the Blenheim, one hundred and eighty; other ships expended in the same proportion. It is not unworthy of remark also, that not a single gun in the British Squadron burst in this action.

The Captain fired more shot than are usually given to a ship of her rate, at her first equipment in England; and it was observed, that when shot or grape were wanting on board this ship for the carronades, the Tars substituted in their place nine-pounds shot, seven of which were frequently discharged at one time, and then at so short a distance, that every shot of the seven must have had effect.

I confess,

* *Vide* Appendix, N^o I.

I could wish, my dear Sir, in this place, to convey to you, in some adequate manner, the merits of the chief personages in this glorious transaction; but the praise of those who were most conspicuous will, after all, be best collected from this faithful narrative of their actions: it is far above the power of my pen to express. I confess, the admiration with which I viewed their conduct would not permit me to be silent, or to suppress the strong feelings excited in my mind, by all the glories of that memorable day,—if it were not for a real despair of reaching the extraordinary merits of some,—and for a sincere apprehension of doing injustice, even to those whom I might name, as well as to those whom I might from ignorance omit. Certain it is, that while the Admiral, and some distinguished actors in this scene, are covered with never-fading laurels,—if others of the Squadron had not the same important share in the operations of the day, it was owing to circumstances not dependent on themselves, and to no want of ardour or personal exertion.

If I may be permitted to hazard an opinion, the whole Squadron have gained immortal honour; for the victory of the 14th of February stands, in all its circumstances, first and unparalleled in naval history.]

The Spanish Fleet, from our best accounts, consisted of twenty-seven sail of the line, and ten frigates: several of them, however, had no share in the action until the close of the day; and after the British Admiral had passed through their line, little more than their
main

main body ever renewed the fight. It was a defensive combat entirely on their parts, after Commodore Nelson obliged them to haul their wind on the larboard tack.

Their Fleet appeared to be most indifferently manned; the flag ships had not more than sixty or eighty seamen on board, the remainder of their crews consisting of pressed landsmen, and soldiers of their new levies. It does not seem to have been their intention to seek the British Squadron; nay, we have reason to think they would have been happy to have avoided them, notwithstanding their superiority: but the British Admiral availed himself of the haze of the morning to surprise them; contrary winds (the strong easterly gale) had driven their fleet so far to the westward. Their object, since the 5th of the month, had been to reach the port of Cadiz; and the very morning of the action, before they had discovered the British Squadron, the signal, I am told, had been made for bearing up for that port, in consequence of a favourable change of wind during the preceding night.

Some of the prisoners spoke very reasonably and sensibly on the operations and events of the day. In general they were inclined to admit that the Spanish Fleet was not in a proper state to appear at sea; and some of them, in the ill-humour of a defeat, observed that it was not an uncommon thing, before the Fleet quitted Carthagená, to hear both misfortune and disgrace predicted, if their fleet were to meet even an inferior force of British ships. An Officer of one of the prizes said,

G

that

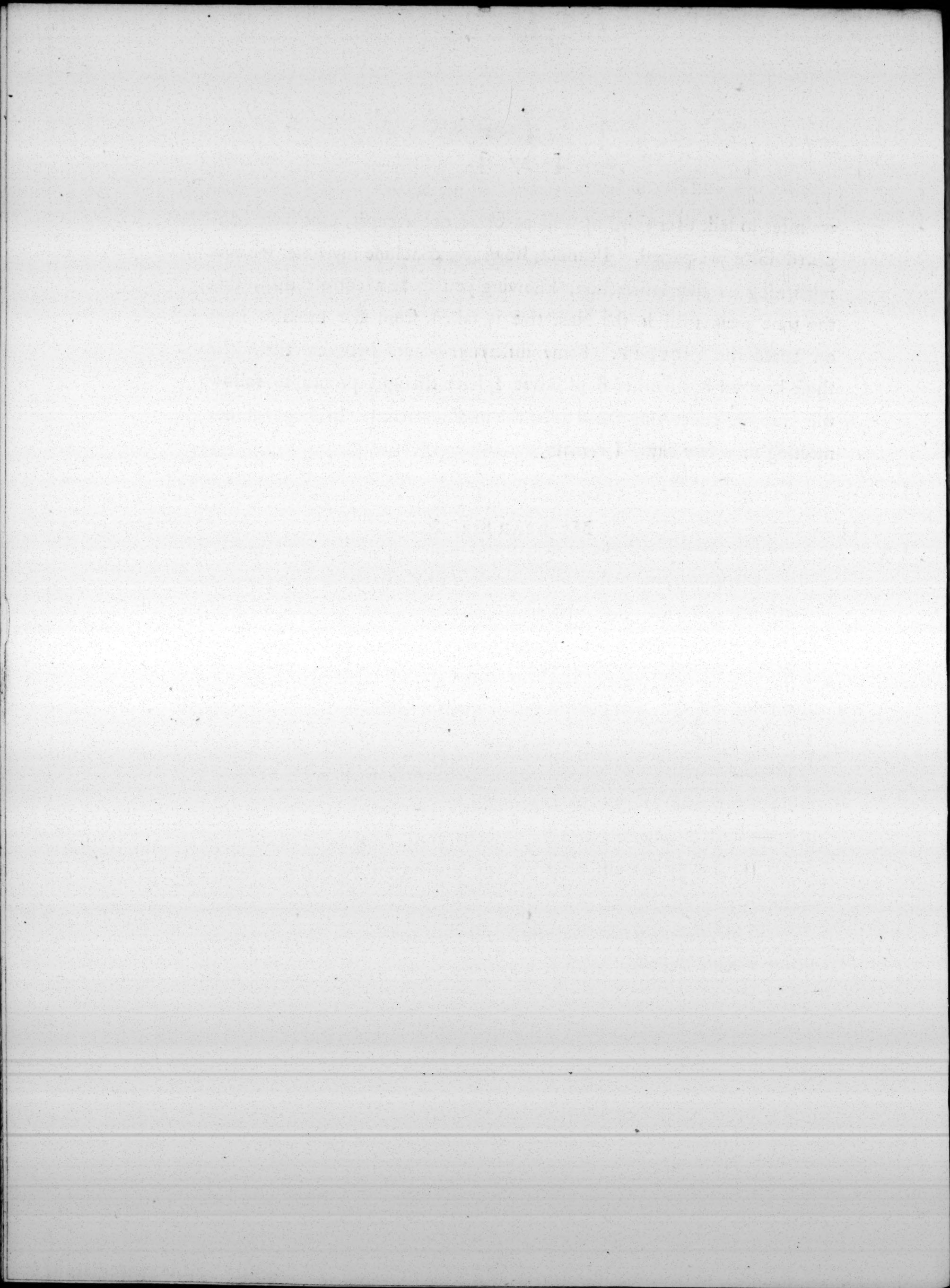
that on board the ship in which he served, it was impossible, after the first broadside, for the Captain or Officers to persuade any of the crew to go aloft to repair the injured rigging: threats and punishment were equally ineffectual. He had seen some severe examples made for disobedience of orders; but though two or three had been killed, and several wounded, these severities had no effect. The panic-struck wretches, when called upon to go aloft, fell immediately on their knees, and, in that posture, cried out, that they preferred being sacrificed on the spot, to performing a duty in the execution of which they considered death as inevitable.

On board the San Josef, when the British sailors had taken possession, it was remarked by the English Officers, that four or five tompons were still fixed in the quarter-deck guns of the side that had been engaged; and the reason being demanded, the people on board replied, with a shrug of the shoulders, that the animated and destructive cannonade of the British ships had not allowed them to fire these guns. It is a question, indeed, if they were loaded. It was observed also, by several of the advanced Division of the British Squadron, that as soon as their guns were run out to repeat a broadside, the Enemy appeared, to them, invariably to quit their guns; and, it is thought, threw themselves prostrate on the decks, to escape, if possible, the effects of the discharge.

Thus, my dear Sir, you have the most interesting particulars of this brilliant affair. I have other anecdotes in store, which I reserve until we

we meet to talk over this, as well as other occurrences, that have happened since we parted. I cannot, however, conclude my letter without remarking for your satisfaction, knowing you to be a correct man, that the time mentioned in the Narrative is taken from the minutes kept on board the VICTORY. Some difference occurs between them and those kept on board other ships; but I have thought proper to follow the former, conceiving them to be the most correct. In hope of our meeting in a few days, I remain,

MY DEAR SIR, &c.



APPENDIX,

N^o I.

RETURN of the KILLED and WOUNDED, on board the BRITISH SQUADRON,
commanded by Admiral Sir *John Jervis*, K. B. in the Action with the
SPANISH FLEET, off Cape *St. Vincent's*, on the 14th of *February*, 1797.

Ships Names.	Guns.	KILLED.		WOUNDED.		Officers Names, killed or wounded.
		Officers.	Seam. Sold. & Marines.	Officers.	Seam. Sold. & Marines.	
Captain, - - - - 74	1	23	2	54	{ Major Win. Norris, marines, killed. Mr. James Goodenech, midsh. ditto. Commodore H. Nelson bruised, but not obliged to quit the deck. Mr. Carrington, boatswain, wounded in boarding the San Nicolas. Mr. Thomas Lund, midsh. wounded.	
Blenheim, - - - 90	0	12	2	47		
Culloden, - - - 74	1	9	0	47		
Excellent, - - - 74	1	10	0	12		
Irrefistible, - - - 74	0	5	1	13	{ Mr. Edw. Libby, acting lieutenant, wounded. Mr. Peacock, boatswain, wounded. Mr. Joseph Wrixon, master's mate, wounded, since dead. Lieut. Livingstone, marines, killed. Mr. P. Peffers, boatswain, killed. Mr. E. A. Doune, master's mate, wounded. Serjeant Watfon, marines, killed. Lieut. A. Thompson, wounded. Mr. W. Balfour, midshipm. wounded. Mr. H. M'Kinnon, master's mate, wounded.	
Prince George, - - 98	0	8	0	7		
Orion, - - - - 74	0	0	0	9		
Goliah, - - - - 74	0	0	0	8		
Namur, - - - - 90	0	2	0	5	Mr. Thomas Manfel, mid. wounded.	
Barfleur, - - - 98	0	0	0	7		
VICTORY, - - - 100	0	1	0	5		
Coloffus, - - - 74	0	0	0	5		
Diadem, - - - - 64	0	0	0	2		
Britannia, - - - 100	0	0	0	1		
Egmont, - - - - 74	0	0	0	0		
Total	3	70	5	222		

Total killed and wounded—300.

N° II.

NAMES of the SHIPS composing the BRITISH SQUADRON, under the command of Admiral Sir *John Jervis*, K. B. on the 14th of *February*, 1797, disposed in the temporary Order of Battle.

No.	Ships Names.	Guns.	Commanders.
1	Blenheim, - - - -	90	T. L. Frederick, Esq.
2	Diadem, - - - -	64	G. H. Towry
3	Prince George, - - -	98	{ Rear Admiral W. Parker. T. Irwin.
4	Irresistible, - - - -	74	G. Martin
5	Britannia, - - - -	100	{ Vice-Admiral Thompson. T. Foley.
6	Captain, - - - -	74	{ Commodore H. Nelson. R. W. Miller.
7	Egmont, - - - -	74	J. Sutton.
8	VICTORY, - - - -	100	{ Admiral Sir John Jervis, K. B. R. Calder. G. Grey.
9	Culloden, - - - -	74	T. Trowbridge.
10	Orion, - - - -	74	Sir James Saumarez.
11	Coloffus, - - - -	74	G. Murray.
12	Barfleur, - - - -	98	{ Vice-Admiral Hon. Wm. Waldegrave. J. R. Dacres.
13	Excellent, - - - -	74	C. Collingwood.
14	Goliah, - - - -	74	Sir C. H. Knowles, Bart.
15	Namur, - - - -	90	J. H. Whitshed.
Total - - -		1232	guns.

Difference against the British Fleet, 1076 guns.

F R I G A T E S.

	Guns.	Commanders.
Lively, - - - -	32	Rt. Hon. Lord Viscount Garlies.
La Minerve, - - - -	40	G. Cockburn.
Niger, - - - -	32	E. J. Foote.
Southampton, - - -	32	J. M'Namara.
La Bonne Citoyenne, -	18	C. Lindfay.
Raven Brig, - - - -	18	W. Prowse.
Fox Cutter, - - - -	12	Lieut. Gibfon.

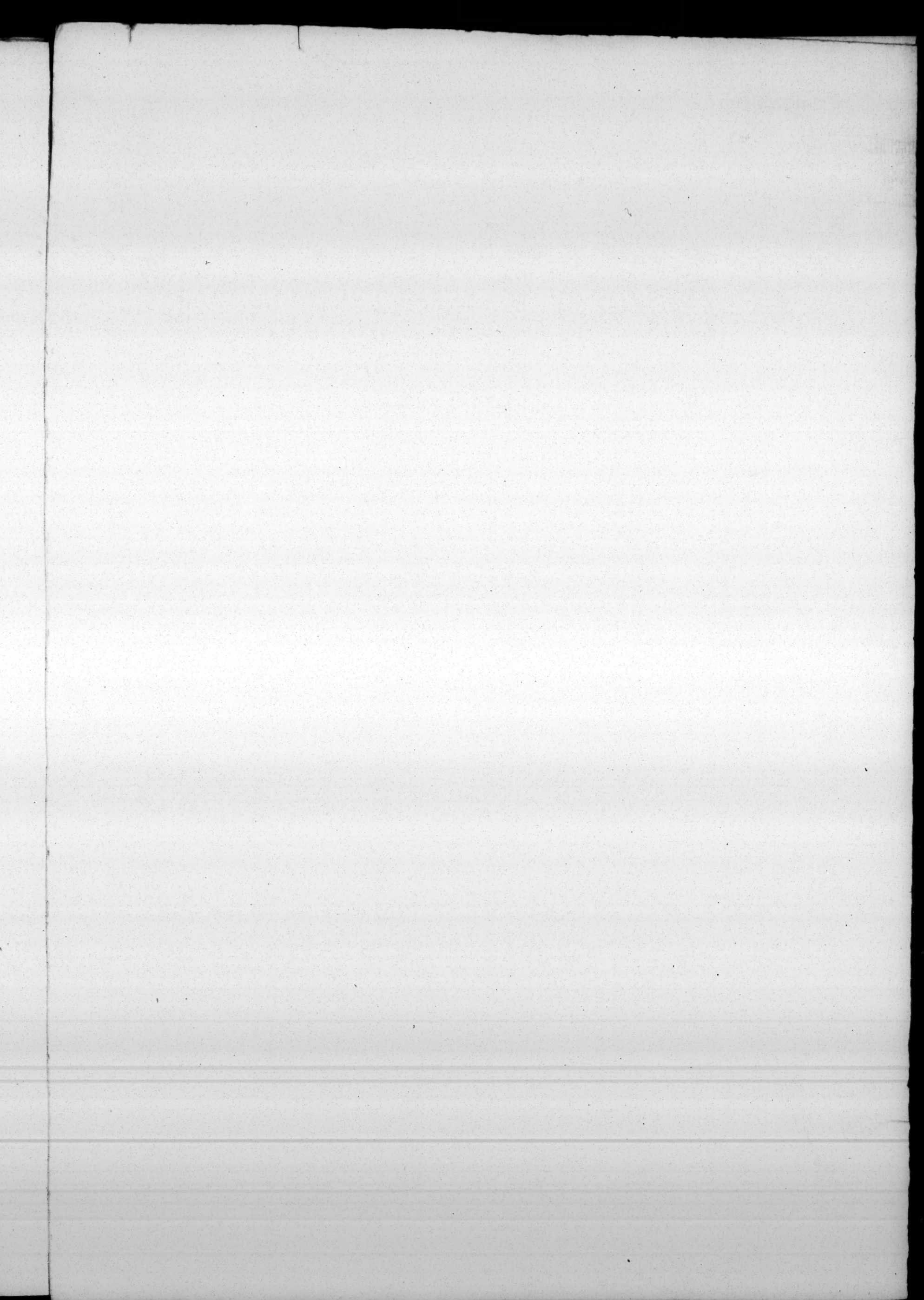
Nº III.

NAMES of the SHIPS composing the SPANISH FLEET, under the command of Vice-Admiral *Don Josef Cordova*, on the 14th of *February*, 1797, in the Action with the BRITISH SQUADRON, off Cape *St. Vincent's*; copied from a List of their Line of Battle, found on board the *San Ysidro*, after she struck.

	No.	Ships Names.	Guns.	Frigates Names	Guns.
Van Squadron.	1	Bahama, - - - - -	74		
	2	Pelayo, - - - - -	74		
	3	San Pablo, - - - - -	74		
	4	Neptuno, - - - - -	84		
	5	Concepcion, - - - - -	112	Brigida, - - - - -	34
	6	San Domingo, - - - - -	74	Cafilda, - - - - -	34
	7	Conquistador, - - - - -	74	Perla, - - - - -	34
	8	San Juan Nepomuceno, - - - - -	74	Mercedes, - - - - -	34
	9	San Genaro, - - - - -	74		
Centre Squadron.	10	Mexicano, - - - - -	112		
	11	Terrible, - - - - -	74		
	12	Oriente, - - - - -	74	Paz, - - - - -	34
	13	Soberano, - - - - -	74	Dorotea, - - - - -	34
	14	SANTISSIMA TRINIDAD, - - - - -	136	Guadalupe, - - - - -	34
	15	San Nicolas, - - - - -	84 (taken)	Santa Terefa, - - - - -	34
	16	San Ysidro, - - - - -	74 (ditto)	Vigilante (Brig) - - - - -	12
	17	Salvador del Mondo, - - - - -	112 (ditto)		
	18	San Ildefonso, - - - - -	74		
Rear Squadron.	19	Conde de Regla, - - - - -	112		
	20	San Firmin, - - - - -	74		
	21	Firme, - - - - -	74	Matilda, - - - - -	34
	22	Principe de Asturias, - - - - -	112	Diana, - - - - -	34
	23	San Antonio, - - - - -	74	Atocha, - - - - -	34
	24	Glorioso, - - - - -	74	Ceres, - - - - -	34
	25	Atlante, - - - - -	74		
	26	San Francisco de Paula, - - - - -	74		
	27	San Josef, - - - - -	112 (taken)		
Total - - - - -			2308 guns.		

Difference in favour of the Spanish Fleet, 1076 guns.



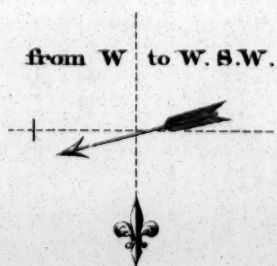
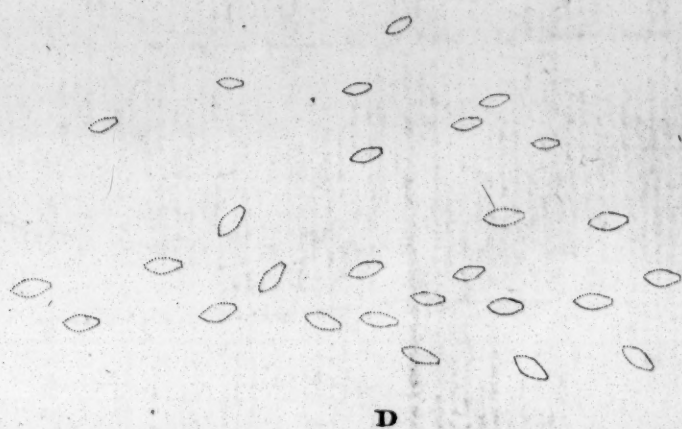
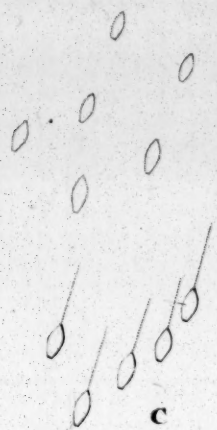


REFERENCE TO THE PLATE, N^o I.

Shewing the Positions of the British and Spanish Fleets, when several Ships of the Spanish Fleet were first discovered by the British.

- A. British Fleet in the order of sailing in two divisions.
- B. La Bonne Citoyenne, sloop of war, Captain Lindsay, advanced a-head, and to windward of the British Fleet, to reconnoitre.
- C. Several Spanish ships and frigates first discovered by the British Fleet.
- D. Supposed position of the main body of the Spanish Fleet, at this time obscured by the fog of the morning.

PLATE 1.



REFERENCE TO THE PLATE, N^o II.

*Shewing the Positions of the British and Spanish Fleets about half past eleven
o'clock A. M.*

- A. The British Fleet formed in line of battle, as most convenient, on the starboard tack, advancing to cut off the Spanish ships that were separated from their main body.

BRITISH LINE OF BATTLE.

Culloden,
Blenheim,
Prince George,
Orion,
Irresistible,
Colossus,
VICTORY,
Barfleur,
Goliath,
Egmont,
Britannia,
Namur,
Captain,
Diadem,
Excellent

- B. British Frigates bearing up to pass to leeward of their Fleet.
- C. A Portuguese Frigate, which was casually in company with the British Fleet.
- D. Several Spanish Line-of-Battle Ships and Frigates separated from their main body, and standing away on the starboard tack.
- E. The main body of the Spanish Fleet, bearing down in a confused manner to support their Ships to leeward.
- F. Two Spanish Line-of-Battle Ships, a little advanced from their main body, with a view to reconnoitre the British Fleet.
- G. A Spanish Frigate joining the Spanish Fleet.

PLATE . 2 .

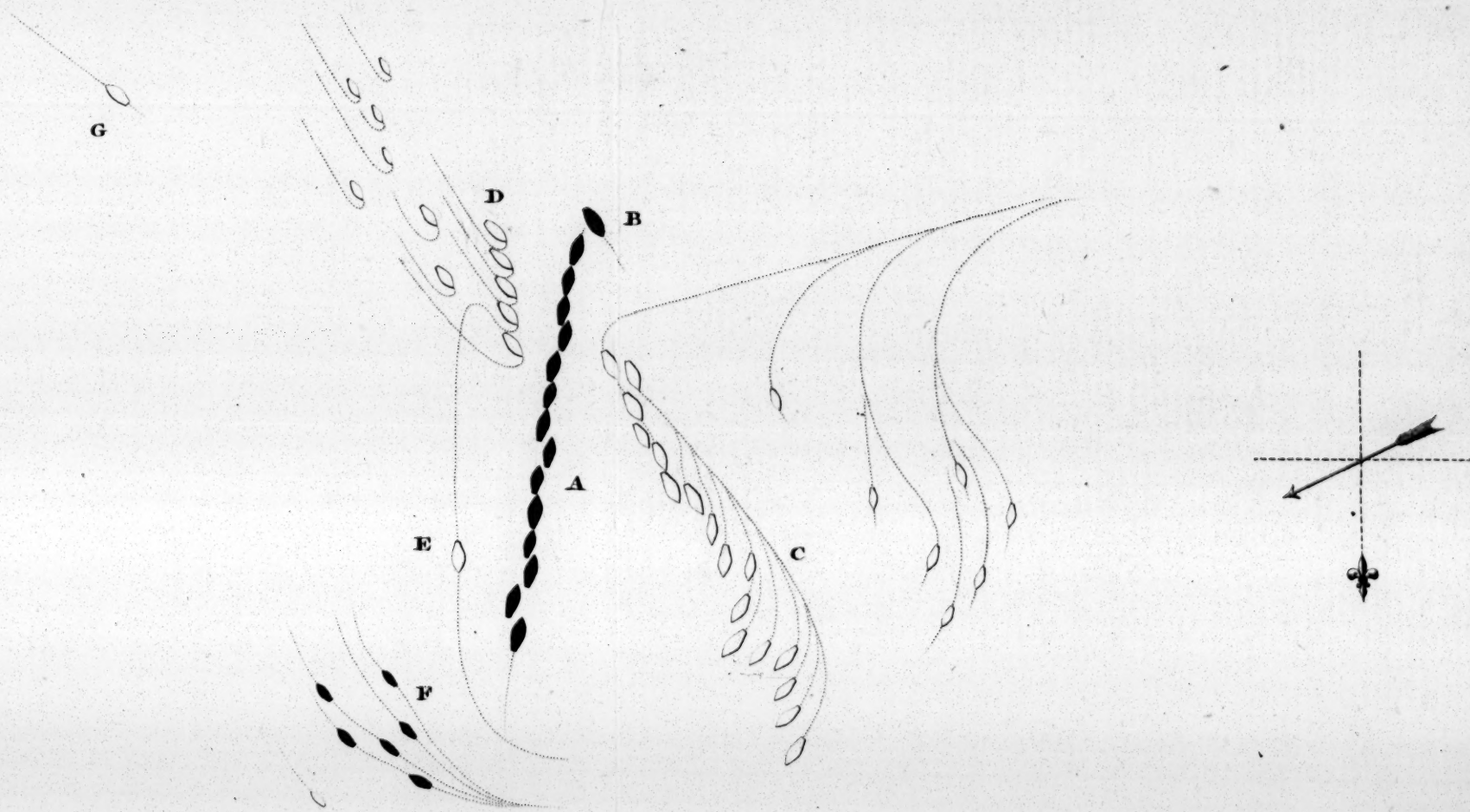


REFERENCE TO THE PLATE N^o III.

Shewing the Positions of the British and Spanish Fleets a little after twelve o'clock.

- A. British Fleet passing through the Enemy's Line.
- B. Culloden tacking to engage the Enemy's main body to windward.
- C. Main body of the Spanish Fleet, which, after passing the British Fleet on the larboard tack, bore up with an apparent design of joining their ships to leeward.
- D. Spanish Ships cut off from their main body, attempting to join their friends, but obliged to wear and sheer off by the superior force of the British fire.
- E. A Spanish line-of-battle Ship, which succeeded in joining the main body.
- F. The British frigates exchanging fires with the Spanish two-decker, as she passed the rear of the British Line.
- G. A large Ship, that at the commencement of the action set all sail, and soon disappeared to leeward.

PLATE 3.

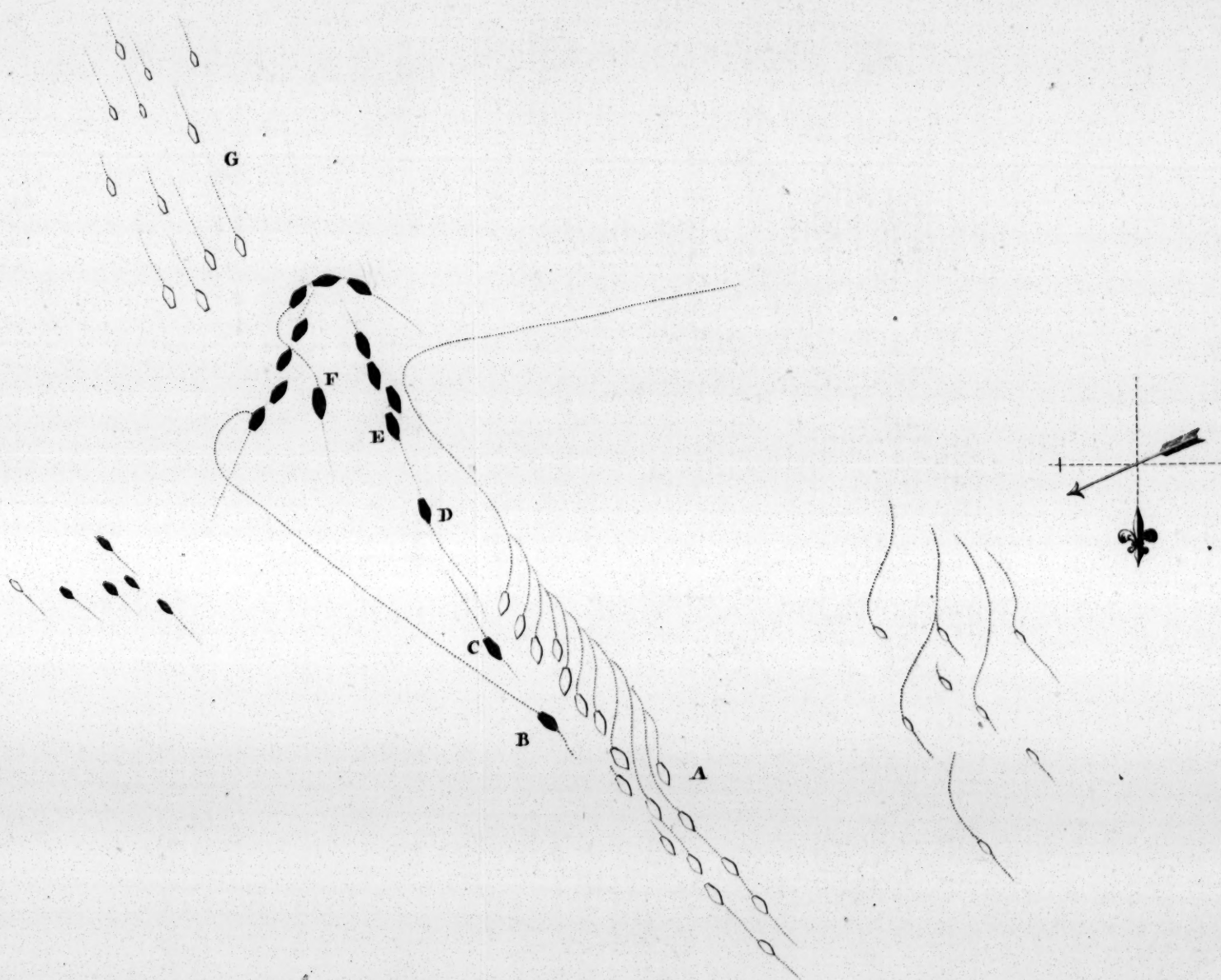


REFERENCE TO THE PLATE, N^o IV.

Shewing the Positions of the British and Spanish Fleets about three quarters past twelve o'clock.

- A. The main body of the Spanish Fleet hauling their wind on the larboard tack, and making fail in consequence of the spirited attack of Commodore Nelson, in the Captain, of 74 guns, supported by the Culloden, of 74 guns, commanded by Captain Trowbridge.
- B. The Captain engaged with the Santissima Trinidad, of 136 guns, and two other three-decked ships, which were seconds to the Spanish Admiral.
- C. The Culloden, engaged with the rear ships of the Enemy's main body.
- D. The Blenheim, a three-decker, of 90 guns, commanded by Captain T. L. Frederick, advancing to the assistance of the Captain and Culloden.
- E. Rear-Admiral W. Parker, in the Prince George, of 98 guns; with the Orion, of 74 guns; Irresistible, of 74 guns; and Diadem, of 64 guns; approaching to support the attack on the centre and rear of the Enemy's Fleet.
- F. The Colossus, of 74 guns, Captain G. Murray, disabled by the loss of her fore-yard and fore-topfail-yard.
- G. Spanish Ships that attempted to join their main body, but were obliged to sheer off, and afterwards made all sail to the southward.

PLATE . 4 .



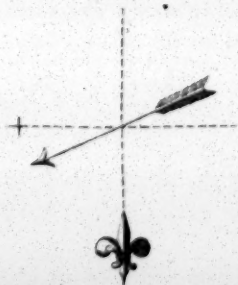
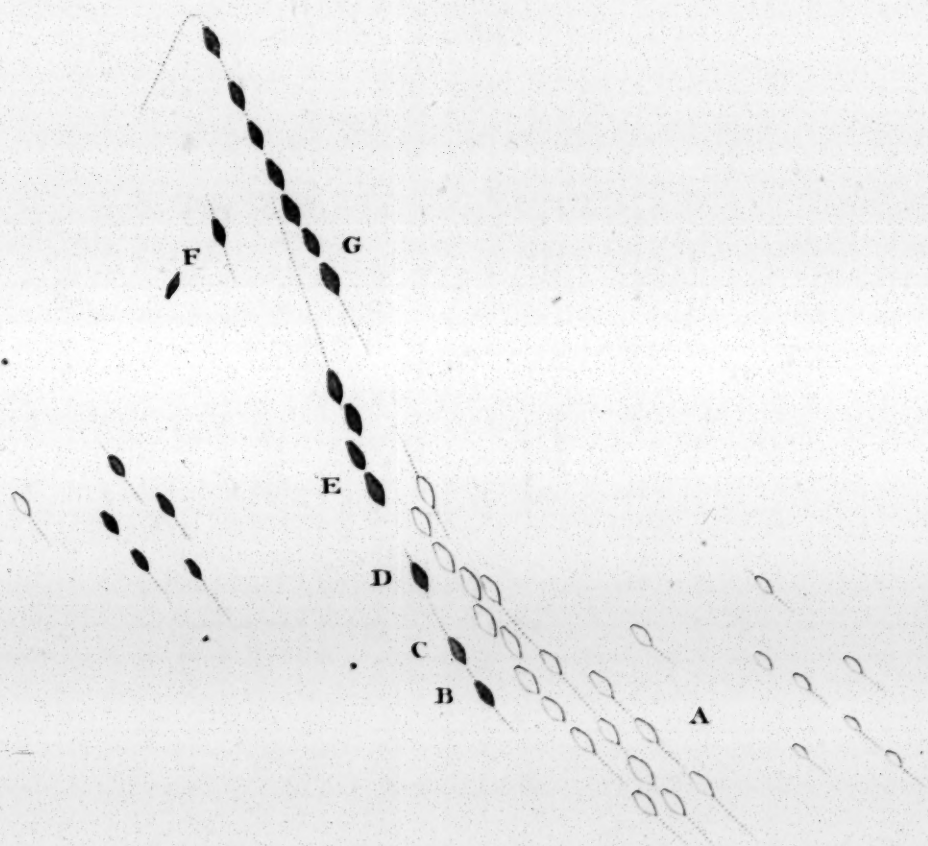
REFERENCE TO THE PLATE, N^o V.

Shewing the Positions of the British and Spanish Fleets about half past one o'clock P. M.

- A. Enemy's Fleet making off in great confusion on the larboard tack.
- B. The Blenheim, Captain T. L. Frederick
- C. The Captain, Commodore Nelson—Captain R. W. Miller
- D. The Culloden, Captain Trowbridge
- E. Rear-Admiral W. Parker, with the Prince George, Orion, Irresistible, and Diadem, commencing the action with the rear ships of the Enemy.
- F. The Colossus disabled—and the Minerva frigate approaching to her assistance.
- G. The Victory, with the remainder of the British Fleet, close hauled on the larboard tack.
- H. Spanish Ships cut off from their main body, hauling their wind on the starboard tack.
- I. Spanish Ships to windward at a considerable distance.

} closely engaged with
the Enemy's centre
and rear.

PLATE. 5.

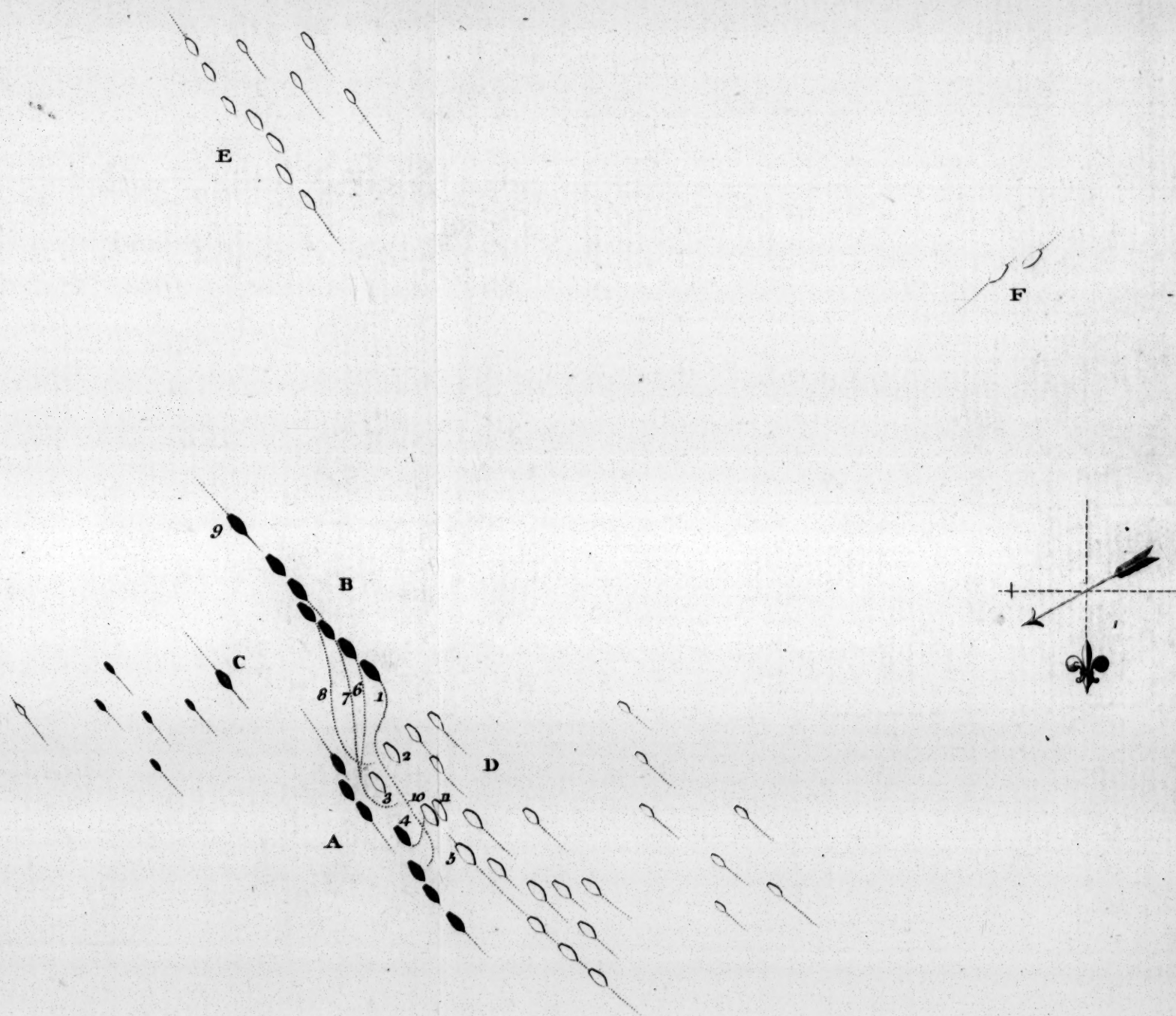


REFERENCE TO THE PLATE, N^o VI.

Shewing the Positions of the British and Spanish Fleets from half past two o'clock to half past three o'clock P. M.

- A. The advanced Division of the British Fleet, consisting of the Blenheim, Culloden, Prince George, Captain, Orion, Irresistible, and Diadem.
- B. The rear Division, consisting of the Excellent, VICTORY, Barfleur, Namur, Egmont, Goliah, and Britannia.
- C. The Coloffus.
- D. The main body of the Spanish Fleet, making off in confusion.
- E. Spanish Ships which had been cut off from their main body in the morning, now rejoining their friends.
- F. Two Spanish line-of-battle, not seen at the commencement of the action, now approaching from to windward.
- N^o I. Track of the Excellent, when Captain Collingwood bore up, and passed between the San Isidro, N^o II. and the Salvador del Mundo, N^o III. to the support of the Captain, N^o IV. and the ships engaged with the Santissima Trinidad, N^o V. and others of the enemy's centre.
- N^o VI. Track of the Victory, and N^o VII. of the Barfleur, in bearing up to engage the Enemy's rear-ships to leeward.
- N^o VIII. Track of the Namur, which bore up with the Victory and Barfleur, but afterwards luffed up to oppose the Enemy's fresh ships and cover the prizes.
- N^o IX. The Britannia.
- N^o X. The San Nicolas, and N^o XI. the San Josef, which were boarded, and carried sword in hand, by Commodore Nelson, in the Captain.

PLATE. 6.

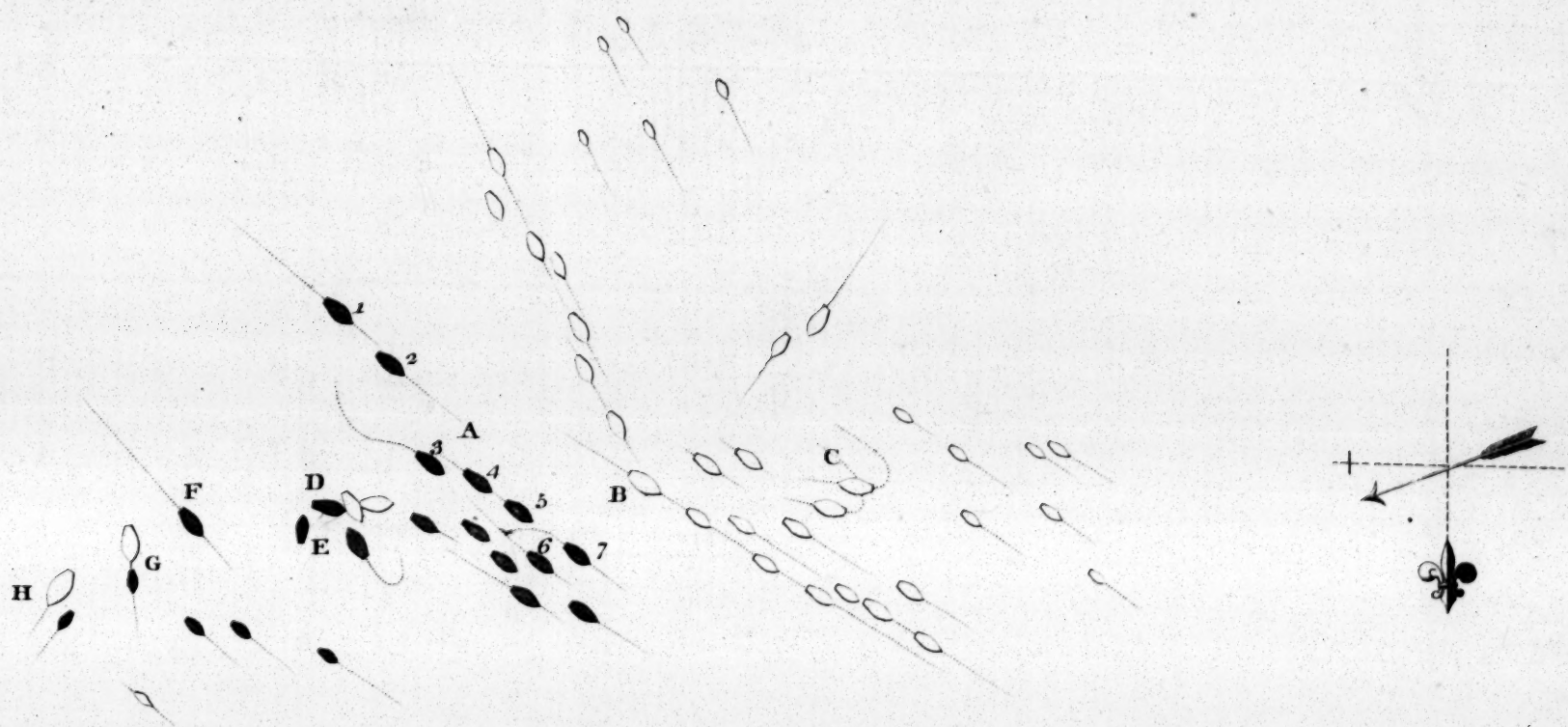


REFERENCE TO THE PLATE, N° VII.

Shewing the Positions of the British and Spanish Fleets, about three quarters past three o'clock P. M.

- A. The rear Division of the British Fleet, viz. Britannia, N° I.—Goliath, N° II.—Barfleur, N° III.—Victory, N° IV.—Namur, N° V.—Excellent, N° VI.—Egmont, N° VII.—covering the prizes, and the injured ships of the advanced Division, against the Enemy's fresh ships, arrived to support their Admiral in Chief.
- B. The Santissima Trinidad on the eve of striking, if not already struck.
- C. Two line-of-battle Ships of the Enemy's van wearing, on the junction of the reinforcement of fresh ships, to support their Chief.
- D. The Captain, entangled with her two prizes, the San Nicolas and San Josef.
- E. The Diadem (64), and Minerva frigate, assisting the Captain, to disengage her from her prizes.
- F. The Colossus.
- G. The Lively frigate having in tow the San Ysidro, the first Spanish ship that struck.
- H. The Salvador del Mondo, attended by the Bonne Citoyenne.

PLATE. 7.



REFERENCE TO THE PLATE, N° VIII.

Shewing the Positions of the British and Spanish Fleets on the evening of the 14th of February.

- A. The British Fleet formed in a line of battle a-head, the prizes and disabled ships being to leeward in tow of the frigates.
- B. The Spanish Fleet to windward, in great confusion.
- C. The Niger frigate, Captain Foote, the look-out frigate of the British Fleet.

PLATE . 8 .

